

Current Developments

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Message from the State Conservationist

It is with great pleasure and honor that I greet you today. I am proud to be your State Conservationist and to be associated with all of you. The mission of the agency says it all, "Helping People Help the Land." We are doing meaningful work that makes a difference for the environment, the people, and the landscape of Tennessee. During my first several weeks on the job I have been able to get out to some of your offices and hear directly from you about your concerns on how we fulfill our mission and more importantly, what we all need to do to resolve those concerns. In the coming weeks I will be out to meet more of you face to face.

I believe in strong partnerships. We cannot work in a vacuum and get the job done. The nucleus of Soil Conservation Districts, RC&D Councils, and our state partners will be integral in getting conservation on the ground.

I am also excited about the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Currently, over two-thirds of our program authorities and funding come from this legislation. The Secretary has his 2007 Farm Bill Proposal available on the USDA website. All of you should take time to review this document and be discussing it with our Partners. The proposal has been made credible by the fact that the Secretary held 52 listening sessions in 48 states to listen to our USDA customers. The ideas of having one cost-share program, one easement program, and reducing the complexity of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) have merit and utility. These efforts could help make our Conservation Programs more farmer friendly and ease the program bureaucratic burden on each one of you and our partners.

We also have to concentrate on our base program of Conservation Operations. It has gone from two-thirds of our budget to currently less than a third. Conservation Technical Assistance, Soil Survey, Plant Materials, and Snow Survey were the four legged stool that Doctor Hugh Hammond Bennett built this agency on almost 75 years ago, and we need to keep that effort strong. Providing technical assistance is the backbone of what we do, and we need to remain technically sound.

My vision is "Back to the Future." That is, working to allow you to get out from behind your desk and get back to the field. This will be accomplished by:

- Working through proper channels to reduce the bureaucratic burden in conservation programs
- Working with partners to creatively develop ways to share the administrative workload
- Prioritizing the workload more efficiently

Again, I look forward to representing you as State Conservationist, and together we will help make Tennessee a better place to work and live.

Kevin Brown
State Conservationist

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Resource Conservationist Steven Dobbs Retires After 32 Years of Service

Steven Dobbs retired from NRCS in March 2007 after completing over 32 years of public service with the federal government. Steven concluded his career as a Resource Conservationist at the State Office in Nashville, but he served throughout Tennessee including Sullivan, Dyer, Shelby, Madison, Grainger, Claiborne, Union, Hancock, and Tipton Counties. While serving in Grainger County, Steven received the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts highest honor of Outstanding District Conservationist.

He lives in Hermitage where his future plans include traveling, hunting, fishing, and fellowshiping with family and friends. Congratulations, Steven, and thanks for your committed years of public service!

MLRA Soil Survey Project Leader Carlie McCowan Retires after 38 Years of Service

Carlie McCowan began his career with the Soil Conservation Service as a Student Trainee Soil Scientist on the White County Soil Survey Project at Sparta, Tennessee on June 2, 1969. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree from Tennessee Tech University, in June 1971, Carlie was reassigned to the Hawkins-Hancock County Soil Survey Project at Rogersville, Tennessee and the next year to the Davidson County Soil Survey Project in Nashville. Two years later, Carlie was promoted to project leader and he worked in that capacity for the next two decades for soil survey projects in Unicoi, Tipton, Haywood, Macon, Cumberland, and Overton Counties. In April 2002, Carlie was selected as MLRA Project Leader at Sparta, Tennessee. In that position, he set up and began soil survey maintenance work in Putnam County, and was also instrumental in designing and beginning maintenance projects by physiographic soil survey study areas on the Eastern Highland Rim area in Tennessee. Carlie continued to work towards transitioning to the new MLRA soil survey maintenance approach until his retirement in March 2, 2007.



During his career, Carlie worked on soil survey staffs for ten soil survey areas at locations ranging from upper East Tennessee to West Tennessee. Carlie designed the soil survey legends, completed field work, and authored manuscripts for five soil surveys in East, Middle and West Tennessee. Carlie also participated in soil sampling studies and other soil study projects in Tennessee. He was also involved regularly and enjoyed working with students at Land Judging and Envirothon functions, and was the first soils trainer and supervisor for at least 18 new soil scientists, 9 of whom are still working for NRCS in Tennessee.

Carlie and his wife, Joanne own and operate a small farm in southwest Overton County and Carlie owns a soil consulting business.



Leadership During Transition

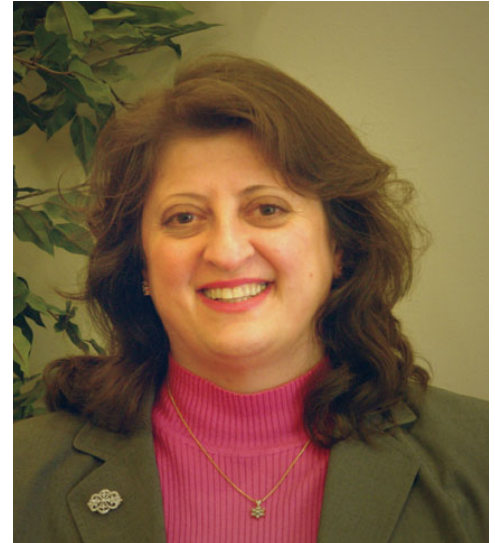
For the first two months of 2007, NRCS in Tennessee was fortunate to have leadership from Acting State Conservationist Deena M. Wheby.

After James Ford's retirement but before Kevin Brown's selection as the new State Conservationist, Deena stepped out of her role as Kentucky's Assistant STC for Programs to take the helm at NRCS-Tennessee. During the transition, she met with the State Technical Committee, represented the agency at Mr. Ford's retirement luncheon (along with the retirement celebrations of several other employees), and represented Tennessee at the East Regional Leadership meeting in Arlington, Virginia.

Deena is a native of Princeton, West Virginia and a graduate of the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture where she majored in agronomy. She began her career with NRCS in 1980 as a student trainee in Paducah, and she later became a soil conservationist and district conservationist serving throughout Kentucky. She was the first woman conservationist to reach the GS-12 rank in Kentucky and the first female GS-13 in Kentucky's SCS/NRCS history.

In 1994, Deena was selected as Kentucky's State Resource Conservationist, and two and half years later she was named Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, the position she currently holds. She was detailed to the national NRCS office in Washington, DC to serve as acting national EQIP program manager in 1999 and 2003 and as acting national FRPP program manager during 2002.

In saying goodbye to her Tennessee staff, Deena wrote, "Thanks for all you've done to make my experience here a good one. I must admit that I came into this thinking I never wanted to be a state conservationist, but now, I wouldn't rule it out. However, it was the people that made the experience so I guess I'd have to take you all with me."



2007 Tennessee Envirothon

The 2007 Tennessee Envirothon will be held May 15-16, 2007 at Cedars of Lebanon State Park. The winning team will have the opportunity to compete in the Canon Envirothon July 29 - August 4 at Hobart & William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY.

The mission of the Envirothon is to develop knowledgeable, skilled and dedicated citizens who are willing and prepared to work towards achieving and maintaining a natural balance between the quality of life and the quality of the environment.

The Envirothon is a hands-on competition for high school students and teachers interested and involved in conservation, natural resources and environmental studies. At the competition, students are challenged with hands-on investigations, solving real-life scenarios and answering written questions covering five categories: Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Wildlife, Soils and Current Environmental Issues.



For more information about the Tennessee Envirothon, contact Allen Persinger at 615.444.1890 ext. 110 or go online at <http://www.tnrcd.org/>



Horny Head Branch Restoration and Habitat Enhancement Project

by Chester Bush

The Horny Head Branch Restoration and Habitat Enhancement Project in Morgan County is a prime example of the success of strong partnerships. NRCS partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Tennessee Valley Authority, the University of Tennessee Forest Resources Research and Education Center, the Emory River Watershed Association, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and the Morgan County Soil Conservation District on the project. This variety of partners worked along with the Cumberland Mountain RC&D on the Horny Head Creek, which is located on U.T. Forest Unit property in Morgan County.

NRCS engineering provided the stream bank stabilization design. Project funding came from the Cumberland Mountain RC&D through a grant from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Horny Head Branch is a tributary to Crooked Fork Creek which is listed as one of Tennessee's impaired streams for siltation, habitat alteration and nutrient enrichment. This is due to historic mining in the watershed, channelization, three permitted discharges, and agricultural practices.

The main purposes of the project were to stabilize eroding banks, demonstrate best management practices (BMPs) available for stream bank restoration, and apply vegetative treatment techniques using grass, clover, shrubs, and tree seedlings. Other goals included improving the water quality of the watershed, using the project for continuing education of stream restoration techniques for resource managers and landowners, and to establish and foster cooperation with agencies involved in riparian enhancement and stream bank protection management. BMPs installed included rock weirs and jetties, rock rip-rap at critical locations, root wads, cedar tree revetments, and a stream crossing.

This demonstration project was completed to allow landowners to view several different stream bank stabilization BMPs available to repair eroding stream banks and control stream discharge problems.

NRCS, working with the TVA, UT, the Emory River Watershed Association, local landowners, and the Wartburg Central Middle School Beta Club, planted over 800 tree and shrubs on the Horny Head Branch site. The plantings included button bush, silky and red osier dogwood, witch hazel, indigo bush, sycamore, red bud and sugarberry.

The Morgan County SCD selected the Horny Head Branch Restoration and Habitat Enhancement Project to receive its 2006 "Friends of Conservation Award." The project also received the 2006 Governor's Environment Stewardship Award.



Photo above (l to r): Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award. District Conservationist Chester Bush, Elizabeth Upchurch (TVA Watershed Representative), Martin Schubert (Cumberland Forest Station Manager), Richard Evans (Director- UT FRR&EC), and Jim Fyke (Environment and Conservation Commissioner), who presented the award to the group.



Photo above: The tree planting crew included personnel from UT FRR&EC, TVA, NRCS, Emory River Watershed, and the Beta Club from Wartburg Central Middle School.

Kentucky-Tennessee Borders Challenge Golf Tournament Scheduled for Friday, April 27

The annual Kentucky-Tennessee Borders Challenge Golf Tournament is scheduled for April 27 at the Eastland Greens Golf Club near Clarksville, Tennessee. Register now for a day of fellowship and remembrance and a chance to meet the new State Conservationists: Mike Hubbs-KY and Kevin Brown-TN.

Part of this year's tournament activities will honor the late David Sawyer by presenting an honorarium to the American Cancer Society in David's name. Anyone who wishes to participate in this effort, should return their contribution along with their tournament entry form to their state tournament representative by no later than April 20th.

Lodging is available at the Americas Best Inns Clarksville (931-648-8800). Ask for the NRCS KY-TN Golf Room Rate. For more information, contact Charles Roberts at 615-277-2575.





Irwin Recognized for 48 years of Service to Anderson County Soil Conservation

by Matthew Denton

David Irwin, Anderson County Soil Conservation District (SCD) Vice Chairman, was recognized at the East Tennessee Area 2 Division of Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting for 48 years of distinguished service to Anderson County and soil conservation.

This year's event was held in Knoxville and Anderson County was spotlighted for their accomplishments in water quality improvement and soil conservation. This provided the opportune time to recognize Mr. Irwin who has been a member of the Anderson County SCD since its inception in 1958. He is a retired dairy farmer; he currently has beef cattle on his farm. He has installed numerous conservation practices on his farm and has been an advocate for conservation in Anderson County.

He received a plaque from the Anderson County SCD Board and a Certificate of Recognition from the Tennessee SCD committee.



Photo above, left to right: Members of the Anderson County SCD board Tim George, Howard Farmer, Honoree David Irwin, Michelle Hoefer, and Jim Jones.

Hannah Daugherty Receives President's Volunteer Service Award

Earth Team volunteer Hannah Daugherty of Sale Creek has been awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award Certificate along with a letter of commendation from President Bush. Daugherty, the daughter of District Conservationist Kathy Daugherty and husband Tracy of Rhea County, is a 7th grader at Dayton City School. Hannah received the honor at the 2007 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program at the Dayton City Council meeting. She also received a letter of congratulations from Congressman Zach Wamp.

In addition to her Earth Team volunteer work, Hannah serves as a Student in Leadership Training (SILT) volunteer where she mentors younger children. She is involved with KidWorks' activities at her church and tutors students at her school.

This summer Hannah will be spending three weeks in Europe as a student ambassador with the group People to People. Her commitment to community service and volunteerism is a key reason she was selected for that honor. Congratulations, Hannah!



Earth Team volunteer Hannah Daugherty received the 2007 Prudential Spirit of Community Award and a letter of congratulations from Congressman Zach Wamp.

National Volunteer Week - April 15-21, 2007

NRCS is proud to recognize and honor its Earth Team Volunteers during National Volunteer Week, April 15-21, 2007. In fiscal year 2006, more than 45,000 Earth Team volunteers nationally donated more than 945,000 hours to conservation. In Tennessee, 1,681 volunteers donated 15,506 hours.

State Volunteer Coordinator Dimple Geesling is encouraging everyone to recognize Earth Team Volunteers in Tennessee during National Volunteer Week. This is a great time to recognize volunteers by submitting news articles to your local paper highlighting the accomplishments of local volunteers. The states that submit the most news articles to the National Volunteer Office will be recognizing the states that submit the most news articles. This is the perfect opportunity to give local volunteers the recognition they deserve and show that Tennessee is still the Volunteer state.

Submit all Earth Team Volunteer news articles to Dimple Geesling by April 30th.



2007 Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts Annual Convention



Photo above: State Conservationist Kevin Brown addresses the 2007 Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts annual convention at the Nashville Airport Marriott.



Photo above: TACD membership re-elected their leadership by acclamation at the 2007 convention. They are (from l-r) Regina Miller (Vice President), Lynice Broyles (Secretary/Treasurer), and Barry Lake (President).



"Conservation - It's Our Business" was the theme for the 63rd Annual Convention in Nashville on February 25 - 27, 2007. This year's agenda included topics such as TN Bio-Fuels Initiative, Animal ID, and Conservation Issues for Ag Energy Production.

Award winners at this year's convention included:

- Conservation Farmer of the Year - The late Joe K. Thomas III of Sullivan County
- Conservation Educator of the Year - Sabrena St. John; Washington County
- Distinguished Service Award - The late Joe K. Thomas III of Sullivan County.
- TCDEA Employee of the Year - Janice Gilispie, Warren County SCD
- Tennessee Conservation District Employee of the Year - Ruan Jones, Crockett County SCD
- TACD District of the Year Award - Hardeman County SCD
- TACD District Conservationist of the Year - Rick Cody, Hardeman Co.
- TACD District Employee of the Year - Cindy Plunk, Hardeman Co.

NRCS Earth Team winners included:

- Earth Team Individual Award - Jimmy Winfree, Smith County SCD
- Earth Team Employee Award - Debbie Blankenship, Chickasaw-Shiloh RC&D Office, Jackson
- Earth Team Group Award - Jodi Hancock and the Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute Special Learning Work-Based Program, Fentress County SCD
- Earth Team Partnership Award - Cumberland County SCD



Photo above: Cadets from the the Fairview High School JROTC Yellow Jacket Battalion prepare to begin a color guard procession to mark the opening of the 2007 TACD convention.

Photo at left: Doug McKalip, Director of the NRCS Legislative and Public Affairs Division in Washington, talked with attendees of the TACD convention about the 2007 Farm Bill.



TACD 2007 Highlights



Photo above: State Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens and Tennessee State Conservationist Kevin Brown discussed opportunities for strengthening partnerships between state and federal agencies.



Photo above: TACD Executive Director Danny Sells and Sharon Gunter, Fentress County SCD employee, making last minute preparations at the speaker's podium on the night of the closing banquet.



Photo above: Clara Thomas accept the Distinguished Service Award on behalf of her late husband, Joe K. Thomas III, at the TACD Awards Breakfast. With her are two of her daughters, Barry Lake, TACD President, and Roy Gillis, John Charles Wilson and Harris Armour, former TACD Presidents.



Behind the Scenes at TACD



Photo above: Jim Nance, TDA Ag Resources Conservation Fund Program Manager meets with the State Soils Committee.



Photo above: Vic Simpson, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, served as Acting State Conservationist during Kevin Brown's absence.

Appalachian RC&D Provides Business Planning for New Business in Greene County

by Roy Settle

Snapps Ferry Packing in Greenville had a long history of providing custom slaughter services and local meat sales to Greene and surrounding counties. However, the business closed in 2005, due to a partnership split that resulted in it being zoned out of business. With the business closed, jobs were lost, and this valuable service to agriculture was taken from the three state region the business served. The former proprietor approached the Appalachian RC&D Council asking for assistance in starting a new business from the ground up.

After a new location was found, the Council provided business planning and grant writing services. A Tennessee Department of Agriculture Marketing Grant was secured, which helped to create a consumer friendly retail market for the new business.

The Council also planned and hosted a grand opening event for the business kickoff. The new business now provides jobs for nine local residents, serves hundreds of livestock producers, and keeps farming viable on thousands of acres in the region.



Photo above: Attendees at Snapps Ferry Packing ribbon cutting event.

TDEC Plans Tennessee State Natural Areas Week 2007

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation - Natural Areas Division - is planning a State Natural Areas Week 2007. The planned activities will educate participants on Tennessee's unique natural resources in a fun way!

The Tennessee State Natural Areas Week 2007 is being celebrated during the week of April 15 through 21. Guided field trips will be held at State Natural Areas across Tennessee. This special week will have something for everyone, from wildflower hikes to canoe floats to cave trips. The State Natural Areas Week schedule of events is posted on the Tennessee Division of Natural Areas website at: <http://www.state.tn.us/environment/na/>. Most activities are limited and will require pre-registration; however, all registration info and trip details are available on the website.



Tennessee Healthy Hardwoods Field Days

Register soon for the Tennessee Healthy Hardwoods Field Days by calling 1-800-893-7403 or at www.tnforestry.com (Be sure to indicate the location you will be attending).

There is not a fee for attending the Tennessee Healthy Harwoods field day.

7:00 - 8:10 Registration

8:10 - 8:30 Welcome and Opening Remarks

8:30 - 12:00 Concurrent Sessions

- Select your Crop Trees Early
- Improve your Forest with a Timber Harvest
- Management Plans - the Decision Making Process
- Protecting Soil and Water through "BMPs" (Best Management Practices)
- Van Tour of the Forest

12:00 - 12:30 Lunch (No charge)

1:00 Conclusion of field day

The same program will be offered at three different locations. When registering, be sure to pick the location(s) you will be attending:

1) May 12 - Register by May 8
Lone Mountain State Forest
Morgan County

2) May 19 - Register by May 15
University of the South Forest
Franklin County

3) June 2 - Register by May 29
Chickasaw State Forest
Chester/Hardeman Counties

Walk-ins are welcome, but for meal purposes, everyone is encouraged to register in advance.

Directions to each location



1) Lone Mountain State Forest
From I-40 at Harriman exit, travel north on Rt. 27 approximately 15.5 miles to a small gas station (Quality Oil). Turn left (west) at the Lone Mt. State Forest sign. Follow 1/2 mile to the State Forest Shop on right.

2) University of the South Forest
From I-24, at exit 134, go west on 41A approx. 5 - 6 miles to 2nd set of flashing yellow lights. Turn right on University Ave. and go 1 mile to Texas Ave. Turn left and go 1/2 mile to Crosby Ln. Turn left and follow to the site.

3) Chickasaw State Forest
From the intersection of HWY 45 and 100 in Henderson, TN, travel west approximately 8 miles to the main park entrance on the left (south) side of road (look for flag poles). Turn south into park. Follow road to site.

This field day is sponsored by :

- TN Dept. of Agriculture - Forestry Division
- TN Dept of Agriculture - Nonpoint Source Program
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Assistance Agreement #C994674-04-0
- The U.S. Forest Service
- The Tennessee Forestry Association and
- The University of Tennessee Extension.

Lauderdale County Soil Conservation District Honors the Late Arthur Bentley

by Arlene Palmer

The Lauderdale County Soil Conservation District held its annual SCD Awards Banquet on March 13, 2007 to honor local landowners for their outstanding contributions to soil and water conservation in Lauderdale County. Approximately 175 people attended the banquet including John Rissler, NRCS and Jim Nance, Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

One of the awards presented during the banquet was a special Distinguished Service Award to the family of Arthur Bentley. Mr. Bentley served as a Soil Conservation Technician for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Ripley Field Office for over 36 years. He was widely recognized for his outstanding technical expertise to provide technical assistance to local landowners.

Mr. Bentley faithfully served the Lauderdale County Soil Conservation District until his death on August 3, 2006. County Mayor Rod Schuh attended the awards banquet and presented the Bentley family with a Lauderdale County Proclamation of Appreciation from the Lauderdale County Commission for his outstanding service to conservation in Lauderdale County.



Photo above (l to r): Guy Bentley, brother; Vernon McBride III, Lauderdale SCD Chairman; Rod Schuh, Lauderdale County Mayor; Elizabeth Bentley, wife; Beth Coffman, daughter; Terry Bentley, son; and Kim Bentley, granddaughter.



Soil and Water Conservation Society Meeting Scheduled for May 9 at Jackson Experiment Station



The Tennessee Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society will hold its Spring Meeting May 9, 2007 at the Jackson Experiment Station. The technical portion of the meeting will cover Stream Restoration, Stream Relocation issues and Best Management Practices for stream sites. The program will include field demonstrations as well as program speakers. Kevin Brown, State Conservationist for NRCS Tennessee will be the keynote speaker. Additional agenda information will be provided prior to the meeting.

There is a \$15.00 registration fee for the meeting which will cover lunch cost and refreshments. The program is also designed to provide six hours of Professional Development Credits (PDCU's). Advanced registration indicating your intent to attend will be greatly appreciated. Advance registration cutoff date is Friday, April 27, 2007. SWCS members and non-members are invited to attend. Registration forms are available at: <http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov/news/index.html>

For more information, contact Mark Buckreis at 615-828-1778 or Charles Roberts at 615-277-2575.

James Ford, NRCS State Conservationist Retires after Nearly Four Decades of Service

On January 11, 2007, NRCS employees, and representatives from state and federal agencies, nonprofits, universities and other organizations, joined family and friends to honor James Ford, retiring State Conservationist at a farewell luncheon in Murfreesboro. James Ford served as Tennessee NRCS State Conservationist for ten years and worked for the agency for nearly four decades. Congratulations and best wishes to James and his family.



Photo above: James Ford and wife Isabelle join in the laughter as friends recall their favorite stories about his tenure as Tennessee's State Conservationist.



Deena Wheby, Acting State Conservationist, presents James Ford a certificate for his years of government service.



James Ford enjoys the moment as friends and coworkers reminisce about his career.

